

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for separating and recovering 3-hydroxypropionic acid from an aqueous solution comprising 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid, the process comprising counter current extracting the aqueous solution with an organic phase comprising ethyl acetate extractant.
2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the ethyl acetate extractant is present in the organic phase in an amount ranging from about 1 to about 100 weight percent.
3. The process according to claim 1, wherein the process is conducted at a temperature ranging from about 0°C to about 70°C.
4. The process according to claim 1, wherein the volume ratio of organic phase to aqueous solution ranges from about 20:1 to about 1:20.
5. A process for separating and recovering 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid from an aqueous solution comprising 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid, the process comprising the steps of:
 - (a) counter current extracting the aqueous solution with an organic phase comprising ethyl acetate to extract the acrylic acid from the aqueous phase and into the organic phase; and
 - (b) contacting the organic phase formed in step (a) with water to extract the acrylic acid from the organic phase and into the water.
6. The process according to claim 5, wherein the ethyl acetate is present in the organic phase in an amount ranging from about 1 to about 100 weight percent.
7. A process for separating and recovering 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid from an aqueous solution comprising 3-hydroxypropionic acid and acrylic acid, the process comprising the steps of:

(a) counter current extracting the aqueous solution with an organic phase comprising ethyl acetate, to extract the acrylic acid from the aqueous solution into the organic phase; and

5 (b) heating the organic phase formed in step (a), in the presence of water, to distill off the ethyl acetate, thereby forming an aqueous acrylic acid solution.